

# LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

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1990



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## Home-making

*For Growth in Faith and Mission*

## Cover meditation ♦♦

After she retired, my mother made an untold number of patchwork quilts for her children, her grandchildren, and Lutheran World Relief, using remnants of all my old clothes from elementary school through college. Every quilt was like a retrospective of my life, and I would sit for hours identifying each piece, remembering the garment of that fabric and my life at the time.

The quilts brought back moments of joy, pain, happiness, disappointment, delight, frustration, and told a fuller version of my life than photographs ever could. There was one quilt that I saw as absolutely ugly. Close examination of it revealed that all the fabrics were from what I remembered as a miserable time in my life; and queen-sized as it was, the quilt seemed like an indictment of my junior high school years.

As I looked up at my mother's face, however, I saw that she was pleased with this latest creation of hers. In that instantaneous look I saw the quilt from a different perspective: here were my old clothes—generously sewn together for me and lovingly created to keep someone warm.

Home is where I can bring all the remnants of my past and have them lovingly sewn together to create something new. And I often find home in unexpected moments and with surprising people. People for whom I need not drag out the story of every patch of fabric, but people from whom I need not hide my heart's response that comes from those patches.

God, who makes a home in us and who makes all things new, is the quilt maker in our lives, the one who takes the remnants of our past and lovingly creates something new. God's transforming grace does not throw out the remnants of the past, but rather uses those remnants for the present.

In baptism we are called to create the space, and send out the invitation for others to bring their remnants to the quilter, that they too might be transformed.

*Ruth Sievert  
Glendale, California*

**ON THE COVER:** Details from an appliqué quilt from the collection of Aleda Harrington.

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## LWT

LWT every month but the 1990 issue is the first one to I could really relate. There thousands of us readers who small towns and rural areas are interested in hearing about people like ourselves. The s this time felt like they were n by people, not by the wire es. Kristl Franklin made me right out loud. She could be lessons from the "Wellspring" like devotions for me. Please more people articles coming in issues.

*Laurie Moline  
Hawick, Minnesota*

Hunt ("Choice Land") is d her own viewpoint, but she little overboard in her ing generalizations. ners do use efficient nery, and the smallest ts of herbicides and insecti- which farmers must be (and licensed to buy). We do erirrigate, cultivate nearly all atable land, nor have we ated the forested areas or breaks. d grief. Our choices are *not* in order to deplete and e the land. What kind of rs does she look at? Must be urnalms.

*Carol Krause  
Buffalo, Minnesota*

## House

omen's group found the Bible on Ruth most inspirational. re in the process of choosing nunity service project, and dy seemed to speak directly We chose to set up a

residence for cocaine-addicted mothers and their babies. We chose the name "Mary House," and lo and behold September's Bible study is about Mary. Your Bible studies speak to our times and to our hearts.

*Betty VanGuilder, Secretary  
Living Lord Lutheran  
Women of the ELCA  
Bradenton, Florida*



## 'Creation' Bags

The cotton, environmentally sound "Creation" bags that *Lutheran Woman Today* highlighted (see March 1990 LWT, p. 46) as part of an opportunity to support women and children in poverty are still available. Featuring the "Celebrate God's Creation" logo from the Women of the ELCA convention and reference to Women of the ELCA and ELCA World Hunger, the bags may be ordered for \$6.00 per bag, plus postage (see below) from Esperanza Sewing Co-op, 6440 Montana, El Paso, TX 79925, phone: (915) 772-4228.

Add postage for bags as follows: 1 bag \$3.00; 3-10 bags \$5.00; 11-20 bags \$10.00; 21-50 bags \$15.00; over 50 bags—call to negotiate. Group orders preferred. Include name, address and phone number of person to receive shipment. Note number of bags ordered and amount of payment enclosed.

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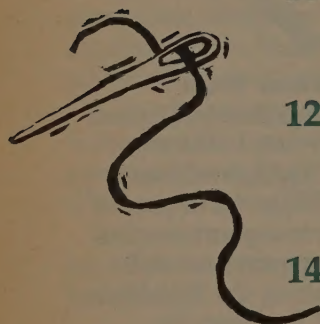
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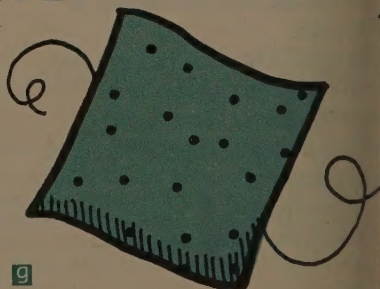
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or  
y J. Stelling

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# Making Homes

Chuck Ruehle

**H**omemaking! That's what countless volunteers do each year through the ministry of Habitat for Humanity. They literally "make homes" in partnership with low-income families who could never afford to purchase their own home by conventional means.

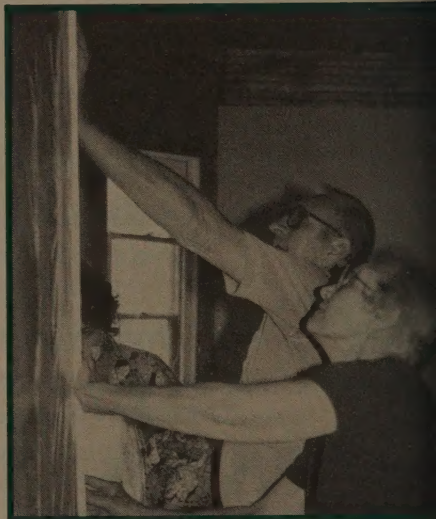
Here in Milwaukee, we began making homes almost six years ago when a local Habitat affiliate was formed. We rehabilitate old, boarded-up structures, then sell the homes to low-income families.

Habitat attempts to make the Christian faith experience practical by having the Habitat ministry reflect the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:24: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like the wise one who builds a house on the rock."

In keeping with the biblical injunction of not charging interest to the poor, homesteaders make payments only on the principal portion of their mortgage. In addition, the rehab costs are held down through the use of volunteer labor and donated

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*Randy Sandes, a Habitat volunteer from Mt. Hope, took the photos in this article.*

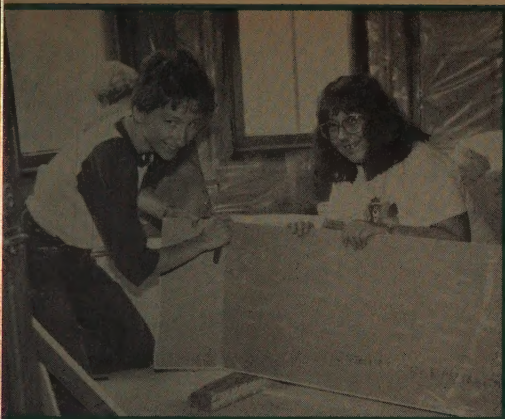


**Carroll and Vera Thoren, members of Mt. Hope, West Allis, Wisconsin, help put drywall in a Habitat home.**



materials. By applying the Habitat principles of "no profit—no interest," low-income families can purchase and own their own home for less than what they usually pay to rent substandard housing.

Homeowners work alongside volunteers, literally helping to build their own homes. Five hundred hours of "sweat equity" by the homesteaders makes up their down payment.



**Karen Mrachek  
and Caryl Harvie  
cut drywall as part  
of a team of  
members from  
Mt. Hope.**



. This on-the-job training ena-  
owners to learn vital home-  
tenance skills while making a  
nitment to the Habitat ministry.  
ngregations and volunteers are  
heart of Milwaukee Habitat. The  
regations—many of them Lu-  
an—provide leadership, count-  
volunteers and financial sup-  
The individual volunteers—  
reds of them Lutheran—make  
nmitment to contribute their  
and talents because they be-  
decent housing is a basic hu-  
right for all of God's people.

Andrea and Jim Stollenwerk are  
Habitat volunteers from Village  
Church, a Lutheran congregation in  
Milwaukee. Andrea, a homemaker  
herself, enjoys rehabbing houses.  
She says, "I like being with the peo-  
ple, the sense of community, learning  
new skills, and feeling confident in  
my abilities." Andrea and Jim start-  
ed volunteering with Habitat in the  
summer of 1989. They work one Sat-  
urday a month, and also took a  
week's vacation last June to help fin-  
ish rehabbing a Habitat home. An-  
drea said, "I believe in what Habitat  
stands for. They don't engage in long  
debates about housing. Habitat just  
does it."

Habitat volunteers represent a  
cross-section of our community:

young and old, women  
and men, employed, re-  
tired, out-of-work. Some of the vol-  
unteers are from the suburbs, others  
come from the city.

Habitat is an ecumenical ministry  
that applies a "theology of the ham-  
mer." Theological differences and dif-  
ficulties fade when Christians work  
side by side to help another member  
of God's family. In this way, individ-  
uals from a variety of faith traditions  
make a witness to God through a  
faith active in love. This witness cli-  
maxes when homes are completed.  
At the house blessing service, those  
who have swung hammers side by  
side share the prayers and songs of  
a variety of faith communities.

**T**he impact of this witness is  
seen in the parish where I  
serve, Reformation Lutheran  
Church, located in the center of Ha-  
bitat's target area on the near West  
Side of the city. Habitat is a part of  
our congregation's neighborhood  
strategy, which includes advocacy  
and ministry in the areas of housing,  
education, economic development,  
and community building.

This evangelism strategy of being  
rooted in service and love has helped  
us grow. Because Reformation mem-  
bers are active Habitat participants,  
five homestead families and others  
committed to a servant ministry



**Jackie Edwards, Habitat homesteader, and Tom Geile, houseleader from Mt. Hope, enjoy a moment in Jackie's living-room-to-be.**



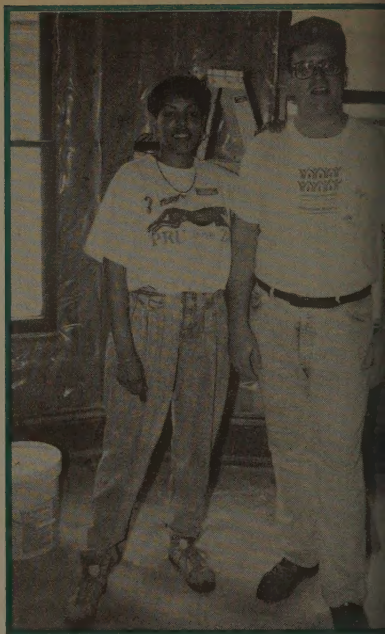
have joined the congregation in recent years.

Jean Leslie, Milwaukee Habitat's executive director and member of Bay Shore Lutheran Church, says, "Habitat creates an excellent opportunity to model a different style of ministry. The dimension of partnership is most important. Not only do we work with others in the city—local churches, government, and trade professionals, for example—but we also put a priority on our relationship with the homesteaders, helping to prepare low-income families for home ownership."

So far, over 20 homes have been completed in Milwaukee. In June, over 250 volunteers worked on eight homes, helping the affiliate to complete 30 by the end of 1990. The local goal is to complete 12 homes a year.

**W**ith over 800 boarded-up homes in Milwaukee, the task sometimes appears overwhelming. Yet, Leslie boldly affirms Habitat's ministry of renewing community, one house and one block at a time.

Our Milwaukee Habitat effort includes six new homes constructed in one week in the summer of 1989 when Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter led over 500 volunteers in a "blitz building" effort. This past summer, the Carters worked in San Diego, California, and Tijuana, Mexico, helping to build six homes in San Diego and 100 in Tijuana.



Currently, Habitat projects operate in over 400 communities in North America and in 69 locations in 27 additional countries. There may be a Habitat chapter near you that could use your homemaking skills to build a home for someone in your community. You can help people have a decent place to live through your prayers, your volunteer labor, and your financial contributions.

For more information, contact your local Habitat affiliate or Habitat for Humanity International, Habitat Street, Americus, GA 31709; phone (912) 924-6935. ■

*The Rev. Charles Ruehle is a member of the pastoral staff team at Reformation Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is the media coordinator for Milwaukee Habitat.*





# n Ministry ith omeless Persons

Mary E. Anderson

**Elizabeth is 25 years old, divorced, and has a 3-year-old son.** She moved in with her parents after her divorce. Elizabeth is White and is raising a child fathered by a Black man. Her parents gave her the choice of having an abortion or leaving their home. She chose the latter. She can't find a job because she has no one to care for her son. **Pam is 45 years old, a college graduate and a frequent traveler.** She owned and ran her own restaurant until the restaurant was burned to the ground, leaving her with nothing. She has little self-esteem and works in a factory for low wages. Pam is looking for housing and saving up for a security deposit.

**James is 30 years old. He joined Alcoholics Anonymous and has been sober for two years.** Before that time he lost another in a long string of jobs. He is a talented musician and highly intelligent. He isn't ready to go back to the environment where his disease flourished, and he can't get into a rehabilitation center.

These three people are very different, but they have some things in common. They are all homeless. They have all been guests at the shelter at my church in Barrington, Illinois, an affluent suburb 25 miles northwest of Chicago. They are all children of the living God, my brothers and sisters—my friends.

Three years ago I saw a paragraph in our local paper about a training session for volunteers who were interested in serving homeless people. I investigated and was trained as an on-site volunteer, going once a month at a church in a county north of Chicago. I was shocked and moved by my experiences.

*All of these people are very different, but they have some things in common . . . they are all homeless, and they have all been guests at the PADS shelter.*

*The people I served have needs, hopes, and dreams not unlike my own. They want respect and dignity. They want people to care about them. They want to make contributions to the society in which they live.*

The people I served look just like me! They have needs, hopes, and dreams not unlike my own. They want respect and dignity. They want people to care about them. They want to make contributions to the society in which they live. They certainly did not fit my mind's image of homeless people! I wonder how homelessness could be happening in an area with one of the highest per-capita incomes in the nation.

Each night after serving my four-hour shift, I go home to bed, trying not to think too deeply about the people I'd met. I started talking to others about the situation and found the responses predictable. "There can't be homeless people here. They must be coming out from Chicago." "Most homeless people refuse to work. They like living on the streets, and they're all minorities." "Those people have been homeless for so long, you can't do anything to help them."

I prayed more for myself than for the homeless people during those times. I knew I needed God's help to be patient and understanding if I wanted my friends and our church community to see the problem and hear a call for action.

I found myself saying, "It's true there may not be many homeless people in Barrington. But there are homeless people in nearby communities; and Christ calls us to seek out our neighbors who need love and care, to share our bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into our homes. We are commanded to see all as our neighbors, especially those in need."

On the first Thursday of March this year, our church opened its doors as a PADS shelter. I am the site manager. The process leading up to that opening was not easy. Many members of our community and congregation are still opposed to it, but many more have been touched with life-changing experiences that speak of God's presence in this undertaking. ■



*Past secretary of Metropolitan Chicago Women of ELCA Synodical Women's Organization, Mary Anderson is a wife, mother of two college-aged sons and a volunteer. She also enjoys a ministry "Neighbor," a clown.*



# What is PADS?

ADS (Public Action to Deliver er) is an acronym which also s to the pads of mattresses are placed on the floor for ing. PADS is a specific ment of people concerned with ignty and survival of those less persons whose needs are adequately served by conven- l human-services agencies. It DS' philosophy that we npt to take on God's Spirit . . . we try our best to provide tality as unconditionally as ble to those whose hands out to us.

## How Does It Work?

ADS operates as a starting for Coalitions for the eless in several counties unding the city of Chicago. Coalition for the Homeless of hwest Cook County was ed in November 1989.) The ose is to provide comfortable er and adequate food during all and winter months (October ough April 30). Coalitions in counties have been in ence for as long as eight years. e well-established PADS' sites onfront deeper issues related melessness.

ifferent churches in each coali-volunteer as shelter sites for a cular night of the week. Each

church site requires about 23 volunteers a night: on-site volunteers working in four-hour shifts, cooks and food providers, laundry crew, and cleanup crew. A site management team is responsible for the physical operation and volunteer training and scheduling.

**3. Financial expenses are minimal,** because donations are sought for all bedding (except for the pads, which cost about \$35.00 each), towels, toiletries, games, reading materials. As financial support grows, coalitions hire social workers to visit the sites nightly and office staff to handle communication and detail work.

**4. PADS' sites are open from 7:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M.**

Thursday nights have become the highlight of my week. I have a home away from home where I spend time with my friends, both volunteers and guests. I am privileged to see Jesus and receive unconditional love from those to whom I thought I would be only the giver of such blessings. ■

*Mary Anderson*

### **For more information contact**

Lyle Manock  
Coalition for the Homeless of  
Northwest Cook County  
505 S. Warren Ave.  
Palatine, IL 60067

# Home-Making

Bonnie Belasic

When Ruth and Naomi were confronted head-on with homelessness (see Ruth 1), they responded to a rumor in Moab that the God of the household of Judah was serving supper and making a home for people. Naomi and Ruth, who lived in a society where widowhood and homelessness went hand in hand, heard the news of a God who puts bread on the table as an invitation to come home.

*Home* is a word that has many different descriptions and definitions. One that offers a helpful perspective on home-making comes from Douglas Meeks of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., who says that home is 1) where people always know your name; 2) where people always can be confronted, forgiven, loved; 3) where people always find a place at the table; and 4) where people can always count on what is on the table being shared with them.\*

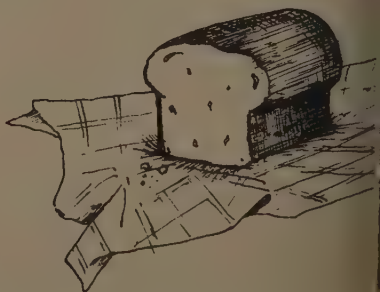
The United Nations reports that tens of thousands of people will die of starvation today. That is not mere-

ly a fact. It is a statement about homelessness and namelessness and about being dismissed, forgotten, overlooked. It is a spiritual issue. It is a concern of, and challenge for, Christians who believe that God chose to make a home with us when a manger stall and itinerant family were transformed into a home and hope for the household of creation.

God chose to become a steward, household servant who created home for the homeless. The image of God as home-maker may be missed by some who dismiss or don't see home-making for the ministry it is. Yet many people are speaking out for the rich value in being a home-maker and for the promise it holds for the world in which we live.

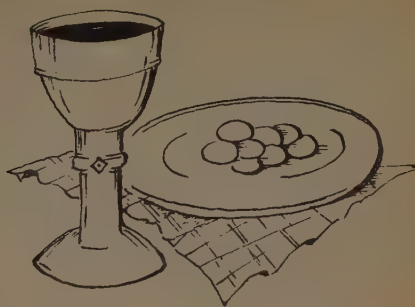
The rumors about God's home-making still circulate. These rumors need to be heard today as invitations by many people. By those who find holes in our country's economic safety net. By those who see, or are among, the increasing numbers of homeless. By those of us who are only one or two paychecks away from

**God chose to become  
a steward, a household  
servant who created a  
home for the homeless.**





**Home-makers today  
are the men, women  
and children who  
focus on life-styles  
that renew and  
sustain God's creation.**



streets. By those whose names  
we don't know, and whom we easily  
dismiss because they are not in our  
consciousness. By any and all people  
who experience isolation, hopelessness  
and alienation.

Time is more important than  
money for us—women, men and chil-  
dren—to be renewed as home-mak-  
ers. We who live in the household of  
God know what it means to be  
known, to be known by name, to  
have a place at God's table, forgiven  
and loved—we are the home-makers  
of today. Ours is not the economy of  
the marketplace, which focuses on  
competition and self-protection.  
Ours, rather, is the economy of the  
Father Householder who puts every-  
thing—even life itself—on the table,  
so that all of creation may be at  
the table.

Home-makers of today are called  
to live, to cook meals and wash dishes,  
to offer hospitality. They are  
found in the kitchens of the world.  
They are also found standing in soli-  
tude with sisters in development  
around the globe. They know the po-  
litical and social processes of the  
marketplace and advocate for the  
poor and less in whatever circumstance.  
Home-makers today are the men,  
women, and children who focus not  
on wasteful accumulation, but on

life-styles that renew and sustain  
God's creation.

Home-making is really God's econ-  
omy. When Ruth and Naomi headed  
home to Judah, they didn't question  
whether they'd be welcome there.  
They knew that home-makers in Ju-  
dah, having experienced God's econ-  
omy, would make a place at the table  
for them.

Home-making is stewardship.  
Home-making is the personal invi-  
tation to sit at the table, to be family,  
to be no longer strangers. ■



*Bonnie Belasic is  
director for  
communication  
and stewardship  
interpretation for  
Women of the  
ELCA.*

*\*From a 1988 winter event of the Na-  
tional Council of Churches Commis-  
sion on Stewardship based on the  
theme "Peace, Justice and the Integ-  
rity of Creation." Copyright © 1988,  
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by permission.*

# Piecing the World Together

Kristine Carlson

My grandmother would have been 100 years old this year. Had she lived long enough, I imagine that her family would be gathering for a grand centennial birthday party. But she died seven years ago. And so we're celebrating her life in quieter, more individual ways.

It is mainly through memories that I am celebrating my grandmother. My last memory of her is from just a few days before she died. I remember her strapped in a wheelchair, her lap and legs wrapped in a green quilt. She was making incoherent but happy sounds as she held for the first time her first great-grandchild, my infant son.

But I have other, earlier memories of my grandmother, of times when we both were younger. This summer, when the hollyhocks were blooming, I remembered how my grandmother helped my sisters and me pick hollyhock blossoms and buds in her garden. At the table on her screened porch, she would stand the pink bell blossoms upside-down; then, with needle and thread, she would sew a bud to the top of each. I was thrilled each time as she transformed a blossom and bud into a queen or princess or a lady-in-waiting. My sisters and I would play with them while my

grandmother cleaned green beans from the garden for dinner or talked with my mother.

It is domestic rituals like these that I remember when I think of my grandmother. They were her witness to me of what she valued in life. They were also often a witness of her faith.

I recall one domestic ritual that was just such a witness. I watched many times when I stayed with her. In the late afternoons, my grandmother would put dinner in the oven to cook. Then she would get the newspaper, which had just been delivered to the front door. She would carry it to her chair, a green upholstered rocking chair that stood beside the fireplace in the living room. There she would sit down and read the newspaper. While dinner cooked, she'd rock and read.

When she had finished the paper, she would gather it together and carry it over to my grandfather's brocade chair on the other side of the fireplace: it would be ready there for him when he came home from work. And every time, as she walked from the





to my grandfather's chair, the  
spaper under her arm, my  
grandmother would say aloud, to no  
one in particular, "The world is going  
to pieces. Ja, ja, ja. The world is going  
to pieces."

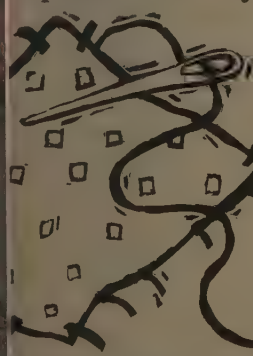
When I heard her say this, I would  
imagine the world as a large quilt,  
with seams unraveling and empty  
spaces where whole pieces had come  
out.

I would picture the world like this,  
frank, because of what my grand-  
father did next. Each time, after she  
grieved over the world, my  
grandmother would go back to her  
quilt. She would sit down in it and  
resume her sewing. Often, when I  
was little, it would be a small quilt  
piece of her grandchildren.

It seemed that the world was go-  
ing to pieces. But every day, my

that God is a seamstress working to  
stitch together the kingdom. This  
quiet, domestic ritual was her wit-  
ness to me, and it has encouraged me  
to pray that God would use me, and  
all of us, to be stitchers, too—stitch-  
ers at home and in the world.

The last day of each visit to my  
grandmother's was a sad day. After  
hugs and kisses, my grandfather  
would give us each a stick of gum.  
Then we would have to get in the car  
and go. My sisters and I would kneel,  
crying, on the back seat of the car  
and look back at my grandmother  
and grandfather as they stood on the  
front steps of their house. And for as  
long as we could see them, they  
waved their love to us. I imagine  
them still, with all the saints in heav-  
en, waving love to us who remain on  
earth. May we be such wavers, too,



I have wondered how my  
grandmother could keep stitching  
even as seams were coming  
undone . . . She could continue  
because she believed that  
God is stitching also.

Grandmother would be busy stitch-  
ing pieces together.

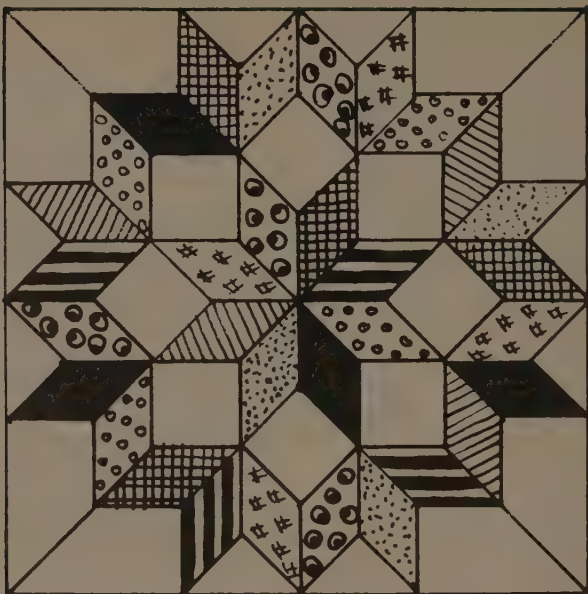
I didn't think about it when I was  
a child, but lately I have wondered  
how my grandmother could keep on  
stitching even as seams were coming  
undone. I never thought to ask; she  
never told me. But I am convinced  
that she could continue stitching be-  
cause she believed that God is stitch-  
ing also. Even as events in life and  
the powers of death unravel seams  
and cause empty holes, she could  
continue stitching, because she knew

of God's love in our homes  
and in the world, which is also our  
home. ■

*The Rev. Kristine Carlson teaches  
preaching at Luther Northwestern  
Theological Seminary. She lives in  
Northfield, Minne-  
sota, with her hus-  
band and three  
young sons. She  
writes, "Rather than  
quilting, knitting is  
the way I piece  
things together."*



# BETHLEHEM STAR



“Bethlehem Star” is a traditional quilt pattern that you can use to create colorful pieces for home, gift-giving, or church. Especially appropriate for Advent, Christmas, or Epiphany, the pattern is reprinted here from *Patchwork Patterns from Bible Stories*.

Stars make up the most popular category of quilt patterns, according to Judy Rehmel, author of *Patchwork Patterns*. This feather-edged star predates 1928. Rehmel suggests creating your star in solids and prints of the same hue; in all solids; or with eight different prints, which gives an overall shimmering effect. To make Advent paraments featuring the Bethlehem Star pattern, use blue fabrics.

*Patchwork Patterns from Bible Stories* by Judy Rehmel, just published by Augsburg Fortress, features 12 traditional quilt patterns named for stories in the Bible. Each pattern is accompanied by an idea for a project that could be made using the design, as well as a Bible reference, historical notes, and a suggested order of assembly. To order this or other handcraft books, call Augsburg Fortress at 1-800-328-4648. Code LW23-1799, \$6.95.

## BETHLEHEM STAR A

4 light solid  
4 light solid reversed



## BETHLEHEM STAR C

8 light solid



BETHLEHEM STAR B  
32 as desired

### Pieces Needed for Each Block

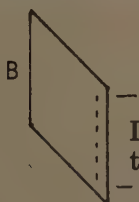
A — 4 light solid, 4 light solid reversed

B — 32 as desired

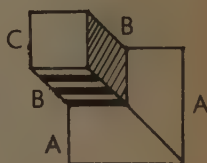
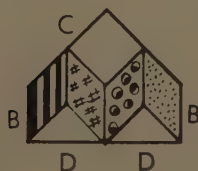
C — 8 light solid

D — 8 light solid

### Suggested Order of Assembly



Do not stitch to ends.



Match straight edges to bias edges.



# LOVE IS A BLANKET

Teresa Gustafson

The quilters at Breckenridge Lutheran Church work together to create warmth and comfort for people around the world. They send most of their quilts to Lutheran World Relief, which in turn sends the quilts to needy people worldwide. While I always have had great respect for the work of the quilters, I never fully realized the importance of the quilts until I became a beneficiary of the quilters' tireless efforts.

One evening a year ago last March, my husband Michael and I watched the evening news with special interest, since the spring flood forecasts were announced that day. Although located on a flood plain, our 45-year old house had never been flooded, so the prediction of mild to moderate flooding did not concern us.

Our small community of Breckenridge, Minnesota, was not prepared for the sudden flooding that took place. Flood waters rose so rapidly that sandbaggers working on top of the dikes could not keep up. At 9:00 P.M. on April 3 I got the police dispatcher's call: "Evacuate now!"

There was no time to remove personal belongings from our home. My husband, a pastor, was not at home when I received the order to leave. Trying to suppress my panic, I hastily packed a suitcase and woke our three children. As I drove with them to meet my husband at the church, the murky, treacherous water rose in the streets.

We took refuge with friends in ru-

ral Breckenridge. I remember that Michael and I did not sleep at all that night. We lay awake, worried, whispering to each other, wondering how badly our home would be damaged.

The next morning we listened to the local radio and heard that our neighborhood was under water. I telephoned a neighbor to ask whether she could see our house. I remember her saying, "I think [the water's] up to your top step."

Because the flood waters were slow to recede, we were unable to return to our home for several days. We expected that our home would be badly water-damaged, but what greeted us was worse. Although flood waters had reached a depth of 12 inches on the main floor, the worst damage came from heating oil. The flooding caused the fuel oil tank in the basement to spill 130 gallons of fuel inside of our home. The thick, smelly oil had soaked our carpets, oak floors, and furniture. It had seeped into the walls, destroying the plaster, wall studs, wiring, and insulation. Our once bright and cozy home was a mess. Our hearts moaned in despair as we walked through each of the rooms.

Suddenly my family and I were homeless. We had no beds or furniture, and we had lost most of our clothing. Word of our situation spread quickly through the congregation. Within days, concerned friends had arranged for us to stay in a vacant apartment. Food, dishes, linens, toys for the children, and fu-

re were donated to help make us comfortable as possible. Most important, the quilters donated a quilt for each of our beds. The quilts were a source of warmth and comfort to us during those stressful days.

Within three weeks, we located a finished home to rent. As soon as a few boxes were in the house, I began to make up the children's beds. The quilt I spread on my

daughter's bed was yellow and blue, and made up of small squares of fabric in a lovely pattern. Although my daughter had used a quilt for several weeks, I hadn't taken the time to notice a truly beautiful

one. As my hand ran over the richly patterned quilt top, I noticed closely its detail. The handwork was intricate and perfectly completed. The ties were neatly knotted and firmly snipped. The sewing was careful-

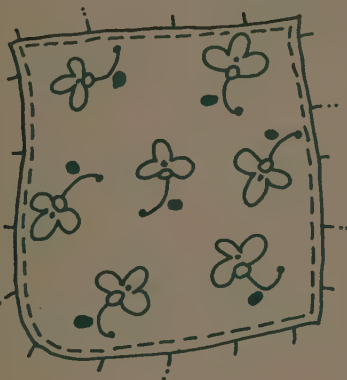
down to be durable and strong. The quilt fabrics were of varying colors and design, yet they were joined together into a beautiful, interlocking pattern. It occurred to me that just as the pieces of the quilt are joined together with interlocking seams, all people are linked together by the fabric of our world. In a way, patchwork quilt represents all the different people of the world. We are each individual in our attitudes, styles, and backgrounds, yet we share so much of what it means to be human. We have our happy mo-

ments and our moments of exasperation. We are each different, yet we are alike in our hopes for the future and our desire for security and happiness. The flood was a tragedy for me, but I knew that I was not alone. The emotions I felt were shared by many others who experienced hardship in their lives.

I sat down on my daughter's bed and thought of the people who created her quilt. In my mind I could picture the quilters working together in the church basement. The scene was busy, happy, and purposeful. I could see the quilters leaning over their frames, sewing machines, and the cutting tables, their hands busy while they visited with each other. I heard their voices and the constant hum of sewing machines. I smelled the coffee brewing and the luncheon casseroles baking. And I could feel the love and concern that flows from the quilters' hearts, through their hands, and into each quilt they create.

In September 1989 my family and I were able to move back to our home, after six months of fixing and repair. The quilts moved with us, of course, as they will wherever we might go. ■

*Teresa Gustafson is a writing lab instructor at North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, North Dakota.*



**The quilts were  
a source of warmth  
and comfort to us  
during those  
stressful days.**

The page is decorated with various hand-drawn illustrations of quilt pieces. At the top left is a triangle with dots. Next to it is a square with a teal background and white floral patterns. To the right is a square with a white background and black floral patterns. Further right is a small square with dots. On the left side, there is a square with a teal background and white diamond patterns. Below that is a triangle with a black and white checkered pattern. On the right side, there is a triangle with teal and black stripes, and a triangle with a white background and black floral patterns. At the bottom left is a square with a teal background and black triangle patterns. Next to it is a square with a white background and teal floral patterns. At the bottom right is a square with a teal background and black dots. A sewing needle with a thread is shown at the bottom right, with a small loop of thread. The title "Patchwork of Love" is centered in a large, bold, serif font.

# Patchwork of Love

All kinds of pieces  
Of all shapes and sizes  
With all sorts of colors, textures,  
And sentimental value  
Are chosen;  
Placed side by side,  
And bound together as one  
In a quilt,  
A patchwork of love.

All kinds of people  
Of all ages and sizes  
With all sorts of gifts, challenges,  
Personalities, needs, and dreams  
Are chosen;  
Placed side by side,  
And bound together as one  
In the church,  
God's patchwork of love.

*Laurie J. Hanson  
Hastings, Minnesota*



# Collecting, Living, Proclaiming with Art

With great care and much thought you have chosen, framed, and hung pictures in your home or office. Some of the works are photographs of family and friends, perhaps a colorful floral print or painting, a landscape here and a geometric abstract there. Your living space has that comfortable lived-in look. Your environment has a sense of life; it is more beautiful with art.

Because you invested the time, energy, and money, your colorful rooms are pleasant to live in, pleasant to visit. Your life and all the lives you touch are enriched by your attention to art.

Have you ever thought of environmental ambiance as evangelism? Have you thought of "art for faith's sake"? Have you thought of sharing your faith visually in your dwelling, your place of work, in your church? We would like to share a part of our experience of collecting art, living with art, and proclaiming the faith with art.

In 1956, the first year of our marriage, we began collecting art. Our first acquisition was an inexpensive reproduction print, *Sunflowers*, by Vincent van Gogh. The vibrant yellow colors provided sunlight even during the evening. The exquisite details reminded us of the wonder of God's floral creations. At the time we

Jerry and Avis Evenrud

were living in a small, bleak apartment. The *Sunflowers* worked miracles; the space was transformed. Thirty-four years later we still enjoy that print; it has been on many different walls, but it now has many companions. Our collection has expanded to fill the walls of our home in Edina, Avis's office in Minneapolis, and Jerry's office and apartment in Chicago.

And what does the collection in-



*Joseph*, a serigraph by Amos Amit.

Copyright © Amos Amit.

Used by permission.



*Prodigal Son* by Robert J. Aldern, who is on the faculty of Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Copyright © Robert J. Aldern. Used by permission.

clude? We are both musicians, so it seemed most appropriate to include early music manuscripts. We have several Gregorian manuscripts from the 13th and 14th centuries grouped together in an entryway of our home. One of the manuscripts proclaims in illuminated letters from the propers for Christmas Day: "*Hodie Christus natus est*"—"Today Christ is born." During the Christmas season that

manuscript is placed near our collection of crèches from countries throughout the world.

Our collection has been enriched by another focus. We have had the pleasure of discovering several artists whose subject matter has been inspired by Old and New Testament narratives. A conversation about our Christian faith has often been prompted by visitors viewing *David Playing the Harp* by Marc Chagall, *Mary and the Child Jesus* by Robert George, *Jesus Walking on the Water* by Robert Hodgell, or prints on the prodigal son theme by Sybil Andrews and Joan Bohlig.

Since 1983, when we were on sabbatical at the Royal School of Church Music in England, we have focused our collecting on art based on the parable of the prodigal son (see Luke 15). In addition to the visual arts, our collection includes hymns, anthems, oratorios, operas, ballets, books, sermons, slides, and decorated plates. We even have a tape of Garrison Keillor which begins, "Once there was a father who had two sons and a daughter-in-law."

The fascinating aspect of our collecting has been the discovery of the many-faceted approaches presented by the artists. Eighteenth-century artists usually portray the father in the parable wearing a powdered wig much like George Washington's. The influence of many cultures enriches our collection and is dramatically displayed in the art of Sadao Watanabe, the Christian artist from Tokyo in the brilliant colors of the works of John August Swanson of Los Angeles, whose father is Swedish and his mother Mexican; and in the works of Larry Rank, an Oregon artist who presents biblical narrative in the style of Northwest Native American art.

Yet another facet to explore is the incredible variety of media used by artists: watercolors, oils, wood-block prints, etchings, photographs, sculpture in wood and metal. The list seems endless. Recently, some artists are even exploring a new artistic media—telefacsimile (FAX) transmission.

Many of the congregations in our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are already deeply involved in sharing the faith with significant works of art in all media. The quest to inform and inspire through art never ends; the possibilities are ever new.



*Lionel Among the Lions* by Robert Hodgell.  
Copyright © Robert Hodgell. Used by permission.

There are always new artists with fresh insights, inventive media, innovative arrangements of space and color: new ways to alert and sensitize people to the power of God the Creator.

Leslie Brandt's paraphrase of Psalm 8 was printed in 1979 by calligraphist Father Damian Kraus, O.B., of the Blue Cloud Abbey in South Dakota. Our framed print serves as a daily reminder of the overwhelming potential we have in the arts:

*O God, how full of wonder and  
splendor you are!*

*I see the reflections of your beauty  
and hear the sounds of your majesty  
wherever I turn.*

*You have made me in your image  
You have assigned to me  
the fantastic responsibility  
of carrying on your creative activity.*

*O God, how full of wonder and  
splendor you are!*

From *Psalms/Now* by Leslie Brandt. Copyright © 1973 Concordia Publishing House. Reprinted by permission.

A fantastic responsibility and a great privilege indeed. We have a vision, we have a dream. Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are boldly proclaiming on walls and in other spaces all over the place "art for faith's sake." ■

*Avis and Jerry Evenrud reside in Edina, Minnesota, where Avis teaches music (K-6) in the Edina school system. Jerry works for the Division for Congregational Life at the ELCA churchwide offices in Chicago in the area of music and the arts.*





# "Comfort Be My People"

## Ten Practical Ways to Help a Grieving Friend

Sandra Lake Lassen

We've all heard it, or said it: "Call me if I can help." We use those words when we try to comfort a grieving friend. Chances are your friend will not make that call unless you are more specific in your offer to help. Last year, my mother died very unexpectedly. How well I remember those friends who were a genuine comfort and seemed to know what we really needed most.

1

In the first hour after the death of a loved one, your friend will have very concrete needs. Volunteer to stay and answer the phone while the family visits the hospital or makes funeral arrangements or rests. Take careful messages on a running list with complete name, time of call, and return telephone number. Keep a telephone directory handy in case your friend needs you to make necessary calls.

2

What can you say that will comfort your grieving friend? A simple "I am so sorry" smooths the way. Avoid saying, "It's a blessing," or "It's God's will." Your friend may not feel that way at all. When in doubt, give a hug and say nothing. Don't say, "I know just how you feel," unless you really do. After my mother died, a neighbor simply said, "My own mother died just four weeks ago. I know what it is like." Then he opened up his guest room to some of our out-of-town family. His sincerity was a real comfort.

3

Ask if you can arrange for someone to "house-sit" on the day of the funeral or memorial service. Sadly, there are thieves who read the obituaries, and it is a time to remember security.

4

Offer to tidy up the house. The day before Mother's funeral, two of her dearest friends came over and cleaned house from top to bottom. They cleaned and cried, then cleaned and cried some more, bending their backs to perform chores none of us were up to. What a gift!

5

Errand-running can be time-consuming and overwhelming to those grieving. Relatives and friends may be coming to town. Picking up family at the airport, or arranging for lodging are important contributions you can make.

6 Don't just say, "I want to help." Do it! The everyday routines must go on—children need baby-sitting and to be driven to school, the family dog must be exercised, your friend may need a prescription filled at the local drug store. Make a specific offer, such as, "I'd like to bring dinner over tomorrow. Have you had lasagna recently?"

7 If you bring food and do not know specifically what is needed, make something that freezes well and try to put it in containers that needn't be returned. If your container should be returned, label it, including the lid, in indelible ink right on the container. Some other helper may load the dishwasher and all the taped labels may wash off! If the food needs cooking or heating, also tape on instructions. Keep food selections simple so that all the family, young or old, can enjoy what you have brought.

8 If your friend receives flower arrangements at home, you can help by keeping a careful record of all deliveries. Write on the back of each gift card who sent the flowers and a full description of the arrangement. Also record each floral gift on that running list by the telephone, in case the cards get lost. Remove wilting flowers and make certain the arrangements have enough water.

9 In a few days, when the initial grief period is over and out-of-town relatives and friends are gone, your friend will need you more than ever. Be a good listener. Invite your friend over for dinner. Go shopping or run errands together. When people grieve, there is a tendency to "hole up" and become reclusive. If you see signs of severe depression, call your local hospital and ask about grief therapy courses. Encourage your friend to attend—in fact, offer to drive!

10 Later there will be closets to clean, clothing and personal memorabilia to sort. This is one of the most painful and monumental aspects of grieving. Encourage your friend to do a little at a time and to expect tears. Tears are an outward sign of inner healing. How can you help? Volunteer to sort clothes, inventory items for charity, and/or arrange for pickup.

Looking back on my own family's sad time, I realize that it was our friends who used common sense and helped with everyday tasks who were the most comfort. Follow your own good instincts and you will say and do the right thing for your friend in need. ■

*Sandra Lake Lassen writes from her home studio in Port Orange, Florida, where she lives with her new husband, Dallas Lassen.*

# If Words Could Only Express...

"When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother [Lazarus] would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. . . . Jesus began to weep" (John 11:32-33,35, NRSV).

Even with the promise of the resurrection, Christians are not immune to grief. Through Scripture we know that during his earthly life Jesus both felt sorrow and offered comfort.

As Christians we often feel called to offer comfort to the grieving, and we understand that to comfort is a ministry. We want to say helpful words at a time when they can be heard, in a way that they might be understood.

In a time of grief, has someone said or written something to you that offered comfort? What were those words? Consider sharing them with LWT readers, by filling in the response request below. Those received by December 21, 1990, will form the basis of a follow-up article in LWT.

Briefly describe why you were grieving.

Who comforted you? (Include a first name and relationship to you.)

What did this person say or write?

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail by December 21, 1990 to

**Response Request  
Lutheran Woman Today  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631**



# People Joined in a Song



Study Text: Luke 1:46-55

E. Louise Williams and Phyllis N. Kersten

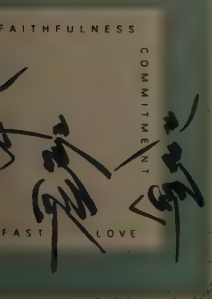
Sometimes words are not enough. You can perhaps recall such times—times of great joy or deep grief or overwhelming awe. Times when ordinary words seemed inadequate to express what felt. Still you wanted to try. Perhaps you resorted to some bits of poetry you learned in high school, or to some phrases you had heard in childhood, or to a piece of music or song you knew. And through song you communicated for yourself, to those around you, and up to God, what was in your heart.

It must have been a little like that for Mary. She was so filled with what had happened—the angel's message, Elizabeth's greeting, the promise of some truth that she was to be mother of the Son of God—that in the depth of her heart she said what ordinary words could scarcely communicate.

Listen to, read through, or sing some version of Mary's song. (You might listen to the *Magnificat* sung on Session 11 of the "Companions on Your Journey" audiocassette, or read the contemporary version of Mary's song on page 97 of the Bible study resource book.)

What strikes you most about Mary's song? Perhaps a word, a phrase, the music, the mood? What posture do you imagine Mary in as she sang this song?

This song has a history. It is named the *Magnificat* after *magnificat*, the first word in its Latin translation ("My soul magnifies"). In singing this song, Mary reached back to the well-loved texts of God's ancient people. The song had been sung from generation to generation. It later became a part of early Chris-





tian worship. We know that it was part of the church's liturgy already in the fourth century A.D. Tradition says that St. Benedict in the sixth century first used the *Magnificat* at vesper or evening prayer. We can be certain that at least from St. Benedict's time, each evening Christians somewhere have sung Mary's song.

Mary's song can be heard today in every conceivable musical style and language. In prayerful plainsong in a Benedictine convent. With guitar around a campfire. In the beautiful "Evening Prayer" service in *Lutheran Book of Worship*. With trumpets and tympani in Johann Sebastian Bach's rich choral music. As a freedom chant by oppressed Christians in Central America. As the climax of evensong in the lofty cathedrals of England. In the haunting sounds of a Black gospel soloist. And with Caribbean percussion and dance. Each is a version of the same song—of praise, of hope, of promise.

When we join in this song, we discover companions we have not before imagined. This song of Mary calls us from the past through the present, into a future when God's final victory will be won. In the meantime, let us learn about Mary's song, and how to make it our own.

## JOURNEYING THROUGH THE WORD

### The note to introduce the song

Luther wrote, "Just as a book title indicates what is the content of the book, so this word *magnifies* is used by Mary to indicate what her hymn of praise is to be about, namely, the great works and deeds of God, for the strengthening of our faith, for the comforting of all those of low degree, and for the terrifying of all the mighty ones of earth. We are to let the hymn serve this threefold purpose; for she sang it not for herself alone but for us all to sing after her."\*

### Reread Luke 1:46-47.

■ In these words we get a sense of Mary's whole being, body, soul and spirit, entering into her praise. And we see already in these introductory verses how her religious training finds expression as she echoes the songs her family must have sung: Psalm 35:9; Hannah's hymn from 1 Samuel 2:1; and the hymn of the prophet Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3:18. The whole *Magnificat*, in fact, becomes a kind of mosaic of Old Testament passages.

\*From *Luther's Works*, Vol. 21, copyright © 1956 Concordia Publishing House. Reprinted by permission from Concordia Publishing House.



Have any occasions caused you to burst forth in praise? If so, what were they? Are there songs or hymns you know by heart that come to your lips when you are filled with joy? How did you learn them?

Look at Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and note similarities with Mary's song. What do you know about Hannah and what do you think she had in common with Mary?

### **What great things God has done**

In verses 48-50, Mary begins to list the reasons for her praise. Some are personal—what God has done for her—and others are connected with God's presence in history, that is, what God has done to deliver God's chosen people, Israel.

First, Mary offers praise because the God of all creation *regarded*, or looked with favor on her, a person of "low estate," or completely unworthy of such regard from God.

In what ways do you think Mary was of "low estate"? Who are some people who appear of "low estate" in our world today? How do you think God regards them? Are there any sense in which you would consider yourself of low estate?

For God to regard such a lowly one is miracle enough.

Mary sees another, perhaps even more amazing, miracle: "all generations will call me blessed."

How have previous generations called Mary blessed? In what ways does our generation call Mary blessed? How do you?

Words like *great things*, *holy*, *mighty*, and *mercy* would have reminded people of Mary's day of the Exodus—of God's mighty deeds in delivering the chosen people Israel from slavery in



Egypt. Those words would also call to mind the covenant God made with them on Mount Sinai, a covenant of love and mercy in choosing Israel, lowly and without merit. People of low estate like Mary, dependent upon God, take comfort in a mighty God who does great things and who shows great mercy.

5

What are the “great things” that Mary might list if she were to elaborate on this phrase in terms of her own life?

### Turning things upside down

■ Here Mary moves from personal to more general reasons for her praise. With the baby Mary carries in her womb, God is ushering in a new age, an age in which things are turned upside down. Mary sings her song in the past tense, as if the victory her son is to win has already been accomplished. Luke wants to make it perfectly clear that all that was done by Jesus’ death and resurrection started here. It’s as if it is already done but not yet fully accomplished.

For Luke, the *proud* were the opposite of the poor. The proud looked down on others because they did not look up to God. The proud were therefore considered God’s enemies—to be scattered, confounded in their own hearts where their reasoning power, their pride, is found.

The *mighty* were the princes, the potentates, the people with great power—especially power over other people. The mighty ones are toppled from their thrones.

Those of low degree, on the other hand, are lifted up. Hannah’s hymn in 1 Samuel 2:7-8 refers to lifting the “poor from the dust” and the “needy from the ash heap.”

There was real poverty among the early Christians in Jerusalem. Jesus’ gospel attracted many we would call underprivileged—outcasts, the undervalued, the sinners, the poor, the women. Living under the Romans, both Jews and Christians in Galilee knew what it meant to be poor and hungry, oppressed by absentee landlords and by unfair taxes, as the Galileans were in New Testament times. But, there are so many other ways to be hungry, too—for love, for safety, for a place to belong, for freedom. The list could go on.

All these poor, hungry ones are those to be filled while the rich are to be left empty.



and Luke 1:51-53.

Where do you see yourself in these verses? Where do you see an Appalachian mother who cannot read? A man who has lost his job? A landless farm worker in El Salvador? A person with AIDS? A Black woman in Namibia? Where do you think those people would see you? Who are the proud, the mighty, the rich today? And who are the lowly and the hungry in our world?

For whom is this song hopeful? For whom does it sound like a threat? How do you hear it?

### Read verses 54-55.

■ Here Mary remembers her heritage—a child of Abraham and Sarah to whom God made promises long ago. And now those promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

Again Mary sings in the past tense as if God has already done it all. Like Mary, we too sing with firm conviction that God has in Christ turned the world upside-down. Like Mary, we wait in hope until that day when we can see it completely with our own eyes. And like Mary, we have much to do until it happens.

### COMPANIONS IN DEED

In some South American countries, where priests and their poor parishioners often talk about Bible events in everyday terms, some people say that Mary of the *Magnificat* would look just like them. (See the Bible study resource book, pages 97-99, "Mary's Song: Whom Do We Hear?" adapted from Robert McAfee Brown's *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*.)

When Mary's song becomes our song, we find ourselves in it and are called to action.



8

Take a moment to list ways that you are involved, directly or indirectly, in raising the lowly, feeding the hungry, and supporting God's people. You may recall especially the goals of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and note any ways you are working toward those goals.

9

Consider one or more additional ways you personally, or as a group, might help the promise and hope of this song come to be more fully realized. (Example: by volunteering at a food pantry or soup kitchen; helping someone learn to read; giving special attention to a neighbor or church member who seems left out; writing a letter about hunger to your congresspersons; praying for people who work with, or receive, some type of general assistance; and so forth.) Commit to at least one action, and write it down below.

### COMPANIONS IN PRAYER AND PRAISE

Silently think of yourself as one on whom God has looked with favor, as one whom God has lifted up and filled, as one whom God's Spirit empowers to play a part in bringing about the things we sing of in the *Magnificat*.

Sing (or speak) Mary's song as your own song, remembering how it connects you with Christians through the ages around the world. (You might sing together LBW 180, or the version of the *Magnificat* beginning on LBW page 147. Choose some other version.)

Close with a prayer thanking God for the companions who are joined with you in this song.

### JOURNEYING ON

Next month we will celebrate Christmas as we reflect on the familiar story from Luke 2:1-20. In preparation, you may wish to learn about a Christmas custom from an ethnic group or culture different from your own.





## Becoming God's Children: Biblical Perspectives on Stewardship

*Companions on Your Journey: Studies of Biblical*  
When comes to a close with the December issue, it is an  
fortunate time to look ahead to the 1991 Bible study in LWT:  
*Becoming God's Children: Biblical Perspectives on Stewardship*.  
The coming study supports the 1990 Triennial Convention theme  
"Celebrate God's Creation" and Women of the ELCA's 1991 programmatic  
theme "Women: Becoming." Parts One, Two, and Three (January through  
August) are written by Foster and Jannine McCurley. Part Four  
(September through December) is written by Eva and Michael Rogness. A  
summary of the session texts is included below.

**Part 1:** **A New Creation in Christ** explores our relationship to  
God through Jesus Christ and our relationship to other  
children of God.

Session 1: "A New Creation" (2 Corinthians 5:16—6:2)

Session 2: "All One in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28)

**Part 2:** **Jesus' Teachings on Stewardship** looks at key  
stewardship passages in the Gospel of Luke.

Session 3: "Good News to the Poor" (Luke 4:16-21)

Session 4: "Wise Stewards" (Luke 16:1-9, 19-31)

Session 5: "Who Proved to Be Neighbor?" (Luke 10:25-37)

**Part 3:** **God's Will for Creation** looks at God's intentions for  
"the new day" and how God's will for creation is  
different from what has developed because of human  
sinfulness.

Session 6: "In the Beginning" (Genesis 1 and 2)

Session 7: "A New Heaven and a New Earth" (Isaiah 65:17-22)

Session 8: "All Flesh" (Isaiah 2:2-5; Joel 2:28-29)

**Part 4:** **Living Out the Promise** explores the themes of  
blessing; what it means to offer ourselves in sacrificial  
service; how to love one another; and an Advent passage  
on waiting for the day of the Lord.

Session 9: "Be a Blessing" (Genesis 12:1-3)

Session 10: "Transformed Minds" (Romans 12:1-2)

Session 11: "The Vine and the Branches" (John 15:1-17)

Session 12: "Lives of Holiness and Godliness" (2 Peter 3:8-14)

## About the Authors

**THE 1991 BIBLE STUDY IN LWT**

The Rev. **Jannine McCurley** serves as Director of Interpretation for Lutheran Home at Germantown, Pennsylvania. The Rev. Dr. **Foster McCurley** is a parish pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Reading, Pennsylvania. *Lutheran Vespers* (an ELCA radio ministry) will include an interview with the McCurleys about the Bible study in their November 11, 1990 program. Contact *Lutheran Vespers* (800-638-3522, extension 2967) for a list of stations.

The Rev. **Eva Rogness** is a staff chaplain at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Rev. Dr. **Michael Rogness** is professor of Pastoral Theology and Homiletics at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

## To Order

■ The study sessions for *Becoming God's Children* are only available in the 1991 issues of *Lutheran Woman Today*. Use the order form on the inside back cover to order an individual subscription, or see your congregation's group coordinator to be added to a group list.

■ Supplemental resources are available to enrich the study, including the:

### Resource Book

Order one per participant for biblical commentary, opportunities for further study, and suggestions on how to apply the study's concepts to daily life (order number 2-9125, \$3.50).

### Leader Guide

Order one for each leader facilitating a group's study of *Becoming God's Children* (order number 2-9126, \$2.75).

**1991 Daily Bible Readings**, an accordion-fold bookmark-sized piece, suggests biblical texts for daily reading during the year to enrich the study.

These supplemental resources may be purchased through the Women of the ELCA catalog or at your nearest Augsburg Fortress location. Augsburg Fortress customer service [800-328-4648] can help with questions.

In the September 1990 Women of the ELCA Resource packet, every ELCA congregation was mailed additional helps for *Becoming God's Children: Biblical Perspectives on Stewardship*. For example, included in the packet is a pattern reproduction sheet of the study's logo to help in the making of banners or posters.

Questions or comments about the Bible studies in LWT should be directed to the Rev. Ivis LaRiviere Mestre, Director of Educational Resources, Women of the ELCA, 876 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, Illinois 60631.

*May God bless our study of the Word and help us grow in faith as our mission as one journey ends and another begins. Amen.* ■

# Multiple Chemical Sensitivities

Virginia Jyleen Carlson

I like crying. My husband is attending bereavement services at church and I am there. Christmas Eve we also find me at church and my husband is at church. Every day is the same. I have been an active church member in the past but now I dislike church days because I cannot take part in church activities.

I am one of the rapidly growing number of people in industrial

countries who have developed *Environmental Illness* which manifests itself in *Multiple Chemical Sensitivities* (MCS). Ten years ago I went to bed one night with complete tolerance for 20th-century living. The next day a friend visited wearing perfume and I was ill for five hours with a sore throat, asthma and bronchospasms. That was the beginning.

Within three months my sensitivities expanded to include virtually all chemical products we use every day. I cannot use toilet cleaners, hair spray, perfumed products, fabric softeners, deodorant soap, waxes, shoe polish, new fabrics, new

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**15 percent  
of the  
population  
experiences  
hypersensitivity  
to chemicals  
found in  
common  
household  
products.**

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leather goods, polyester or nylon, spray cans, all pesticides, rug cleaners, new carpeting, new cars . . . the list goes on and on.

I cannot go into a new home or into apartment buildings. The pesticides and strong cleaning products used in public buildings keep me from going into churches, museums, or theaters. I know the spraying schedules of the restaurants and

grocery stores I frequent.

The Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology of the National Research Council (the research branch of the National Academy of Sciences) estimates that 15 percent of the population experiences hypersensitivity to chemicals found in common household products. MCS is characterized by intolerance to small amounts of chemicals that do not seem to affect most people. Because chemicals have a sensitizing capability, people can become sensitive to low levels of a chemical and experience cross-reactions to other chemicals.

Chronic low exposures to contam-



inants appears to sensitize susceptible individuals, and most people with MCS (about 80 percent) are women. When people become sensitized, they react to almost everything that is considered common in the 20th century, including paints, detergents, dry-cleaning solvents, smoke, latex, gasoline and diesel fuels, newsprint dyes, and glues.

People with MCS drink filtered water, wear cotton, eat organic food, sleep in bare-floored bedrooms, purchase old cars and old houses

that have not been sprayed. They are usually housebound. If they encounter one person with hair spray, deodorant, perfume, or new clothing, they become ill.

Their reaction may show itself in many different ways: asthma, Parkinson-like symptoms, headache, confusion, diarrhea, arthritis, nervous system problems, coughing, sore throats, blurred vision, loss of muscle control, crying, hyperactivity, or depression. Blood tests show that each of us is carrying a tremendous chemical load. Our immune systems are already stressed, and it takes only one more chemical exposure to trigger MCS.

For two years I served as President of HEAL, Inc. (Human Ecology Action League), an education/information agency with over 200 support groups listed in six English-speaking countries. Most of the board members have MCS; those that don't have spouses that do. We are a rap-

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chemical load.  
Our immune  
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stressed,  
and it takes  
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chemical  
exposure to  
trigger MCS.**

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idly growing organization, since more people are becoming ill every day from the pollution in our environment and are in need of help.

I hope that Christians become increasingly active in the environmental movement and live as good stewards of this earth. We can, for instance, attempt to use nontoxic cleaning products, go easy on perfume products, and quit spraying our churches and schools with pesticides. Children have immature immune systems and

should be especially careful not to expose them to harmful chemicals.

For more information about Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, write Human Ecology Action League, P.O. Box 49126, Atlanta, Georgia, 30351-1126, which publishes a quarterly magazine for its members. (Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request.) ■

*Virginia Carlson of Ames, Iowa, is a member of Bethesda Lutheran Church, where she has been involved in her women's organization. She and her husband, Norman Carlson, have reared three children and now enjoy six grandchildren.*



# Nontoxic Cleaning Methods

Ene Grosfield Knudson

awareness grows of the risks of indoor pollution, more and more attention will be paid to nontoxic sources of that pollution. Synthetic materials, including the chemicals found in commercial cleaning products. As environmental stewards, we need to be concerned about the long-term effects of the products we use. More and more studies show that products such as rug sham-shampoo, chlorinated scouring powder, metal cleaners, ammonia, glass cleaners, drain cleaners, air fresheners, germ-killing disinfectants, glass cleaners, laundry detergents, chlorine bleach, furniture cleaner may be endangering our health. Many of these products contain chemicals which can cause cancer, weaken immune systems, and cause such symptoms as headaches, depression, skin irritation, and lung problems. Children, women, and those already ill are especially at risk. Therefore, nontoxic alternatives for cleaning are cheaper and require fewer cleaning supplies. White vinegar, baking soda, salt, lemon juice, liquid soap, borax, nonchlorinated scouring powder are basic cleaning staples. Why use toxic products when safe alternatives are available? ■

## Alternative cleaners:

### Drain cleaner

Pour a handful of baking soda and ½ cup distilled white vinegar down the drain. Cover tightly five minutes. Rinse with hot water.

### Scouring powder

Use baking soda, borax (which kills mold), nonchlorinated scouring powder, or table salt on a wet cloth or sponge.

### Glass cleaner

Half white vinegar and half water in a pump spray bottle.

### Floor cleaner

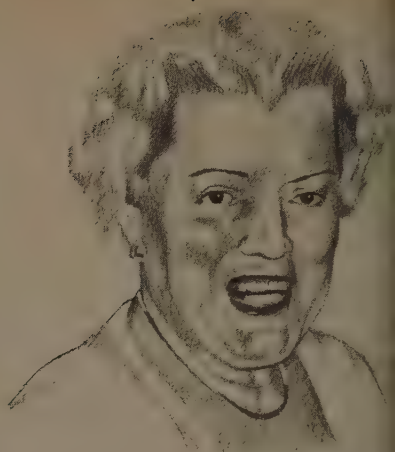
One-quarter cup white vinegar in a gallon of water.

For more "recipes" and information, many resources are available at libraries and bookstores. Two of my favorites are written by Debra Lynn Dadd: *The Nontoxic Home: Protecting Yourself and Your Family from Everyday Toxics and Health Hazards* (J. P. Tarcher, 1986, \$9.95) and *Nontoxic and Natural: How To Avoid Dangerous Everyday Products and Buy or Make Safe Ones* (J. P. Tarcher, 1984, \$9.95).

*Eline Knudson, a homemaker and mother of two, leads a support group for persons who are hypersensitive to modern chemicals commonly found in indoor air environments.*

## Carmen Garcia Nuñez "Nicky"

Iris Sosa



After Nicky recovered from open-heart surgery, she decided to dedicate herself to God in a special way.

She was delighted when she was elected to the board of the Caribbean Synodical Women's Organization, because it would help her reach out farther in her service to God and God's kingdom. She graciously agreed to be chairperson for Mission: Community in Puerto Rico.

Nicky was always willing to lend her help. Because she had spent part of her life in New York she was fluent in both English and Spanish. She gave English classes to persons and groups.

A popular guest speaker, Nicky gave messages full of love, understanding, compassion, and touching spirituality.

Nicky was the Caribbean representative at the Women of the ELCA One in Christ Event. And when Hurricane Hugo hit the Caribbean in September 1989, Nicky was in Chicago on her way back from that event. She could not return to Puerto Rico, since the island airport was closed. She spent those days with Josefina Nieves-Lebron and went with

her to the ELCA churchwide office to see how she could help. Nicky just could not be still.

When the airport finally opened after Hugo, she returned home, and with the help of other members of her church—San Esteban Malpica—she started collecting for deliver items needed in the community. Nicky also worked as a volunteer in the bishop's office.

At the time of her death, Nicky was still very involved in projects to help our sisters and brothers in St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas.

It will be very difficult to fill the void left by Nicky. She was such a special person! ■

*Iris Sosa is currently president of the Caribbean Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA.*

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\*Carmen (Nicky) Garcia Nuñez was a member of the Caribbean Synodical Women's Organization board. Nicky died in November 1989 as the result of an accident suffered at a Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Leadership Event.



# Coming Home for Thanksgiving

Barbara Benedict Hibsichman

**I**t was the first Thanksgiving since we moved far away from Dad. And since my seminary student husband, Jim, had a research paper to do, we wouldn't be going home to spend Thanksgiving with Dad.

We were saddened to get a phone call on Thanksgiving Eve and learn that Dad would be spending the holiday alone. My only brother, Stephen, a soldier at Fort Benning, Georgia, had a 48-hour pass, but he couldn't get a flight.

After hanging up the phone, we exchanged looks of disappointment.

"If we could get a flight out and back in the same day, or early the next morning, I could still get this paper done," Jim reasoned.

"Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. Do you think we can still get a flight? And, if we could, do we have the money?"

"I think so, but it will have to be a big part of our Christmas," he suggested.

"Let's go for it," I agreed.

We did get a flight, and to our amazement we were packed and off to the airport within a couple hours.

We arrived early in the morning. Our hearts were bursting with thankfulness for how it all worked out. We began to make preparations for the meal when an unexpected phone call from my brother urged us to hurry back to the airport. He had spent the night in Atlanta, waiting on stand-by. He, too, was coming home.

Because of all the traveling, the menu was not the traditional dinner with all the trimmings. No one minded. We were simply grateful to be together. Dad was so pleased. He knew his children made every effort to be with him.

God our heavenly Father longs for his children to "come home" too. How it must please God when we make every effort to gather as brothers and sisters in Christ in praise and worship. It must delight God to hear our expressions of thanksgiving and joy.

Whether you have traditional turkey dinner or not, Thanksgiving can be experienced. It is an attitude of the heart. It is coming home. ■

*Barbara Hibsichman, a free-lance writer from Warren, New Jersey, is a mother and the wife of a pastor.*

## Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

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### South African churches gather for first time

In November, South African churches met under a single roof. This is the first time all of the churches have met as a group, said South African Council of Churches General Secretary Frank Chikane. Some South African churches have denounced the country's apartheid system while other churches have taken a less forceful stand, or no stand, against it.

*Bless the churches' work in South Africa, O God, and bring freedom to your people.*

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### Wisconsin congregations build bridges

Osseo Lutheran Church in Osseo, Wisconsin, held a forum designed to increase understanding and build bridges between Whites and Native Americans. Each spring just as the fishing season in Wisconsin approaches—when Native Americans engage in legal spear-fishing—incidents have erupted on boat landings. Several other Wisconsin congregations are leading the way toward peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for one another's life-styles.

*Teach us to love and honor one another as equal partners in your creation, O God of Love.*

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### Bangladesh Christians can own New Testaments

The Bangladesh government has lifted an earlier ban on the importation or possession of the Bengali version of the New Testament known as the *Injil Sharif*. Missionaries in Bangladesh had asked Christians around the world to plead, through local Bangladesh embassies, for the lifting of the ban.

*Thank you, O Lord, that Bangladesh Christians can read your Word.*

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### Tanzania Lutherans ordain women

Tanzania's Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCT), with 1.4 million members, voted in July to ordain women pastors.

The church's general assembly approved the decision by an overwhelming majority during a meeting at Morogoro, west of the capital city of Dar es Salaam. The ELCT is the largest Lutheran church in Africa.

*God of change and growth, bless this decision of the Tanzanian church and the new gifts for ministry it ushers in.*

Let the local, national, and international news provide you with material to build a daily prayer list. ■

*Sonia C. Groenewold is news editor of The Lutheran.*

# A Simple Task

Rebecca J. Berkas

On a warm day in tropical Madagascar and, after having taken his fourth dip of the day in his wading pool, my two-year-old son came trudging up the steps to get dressed yet again. He had all the right pieces: socks, shoes, underpants, shorts, and a shirt. I knew what I was doing and we started the process. It was not a simple task. Nathan was doing a somersault as I tried to put on his underpants. He was lying on his back as I tried to put on his shirt, and he was sitting on the floor as I tried to put on his shorts. He was jumping up and down while I was trying to put on his socks and shoes. I kept telling Nathan, "Help Mama," but the words didn't appear to have any effect on him. It took me nearly 15 minutes just to get him dressed. Happy and content, he headed out to play, and I went back to my work. Not too long afterward I looked out in the yard only to see him pulling off his underpants and heading back into the pool. I groaned and chastised myself for not dumping out the water when I had the chance. Just as I suspected, within a few minutes I heard the familiar words, "Dressed, Mama!" as he came marching up the steps.

About the same time his little friend called for him from outside. In a sudden urgency he was ready to get dressed. He stood still and even helped push his arms and legs through when I needed to. This time dressing was a simple task, and quickly he was out and running.

After that evening, during my devotions, I reflected on the day. A few hours removed, I was able to chuckle at Nathan's antics, and I began to think how very much like him I must appear to the Lord at times. I come all prepared to do my Bible study, my prayer time, go to church. But then I get distracted and forget the sight of what I started to do, or I put up a struggle because I don't necessarily want to do what God is asking of me. There are other times, though, when it all seems to flow so well. The Lord and I work together. Indeed, God is with me all the time, wanting to show me what is best if only I stop struggling, listen, and rest in the Lord. ■

*Having recently returned from Madagascar, Rebecca Lundeen Berkas lives with her husband and two small children in St. Paul, Minnesota. They plan to return to Madagascar after an extended leave.*





# A Foundation for Giving



Caroline had always wanted to make a gift to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America but she felt that she needed the current income from her investments for living expenses.

In talking with staff members at the ELCA Foundation, however, she learned that she could make the gift now, through a life-income plan that would allow her significant tax savings, and still provide the income she expects to need now and in the future. The foundation will invest her gift to the church and pay her a quarterly dividend for the rest of her life. Then, after her death, the church will begin to receive the income from her gift.

"The purpose of the ELCA Foundation is to help people in their stewardship," said Harvey Stegemoeller, executive director of the ELCA Foundation. "Everything we have is a trust from the Lord, and however we use our assets—whether for family, church or other purpose—should be a manifestation of our Christian commitment."

The foundation works with church members and others to advise them about giving strategies. It also helps them decide goals and purposes and enables them to realize the best tax advantages from each gift. There are a number of ways to make special gifts to the church; and, indeed, many of the ministries of the ELCA are supported by these special gifts and bequests.

"The scholarship and grants program of Women of the ELCA is entirely the result of past gifts from generous donors," said Charlotte Fiechter, executive director of the women's organization. Recently, according to Fiechter, a donor wanted to make a gift to the women's organization to honor a friend. In talking with foundation staff member Jim Jensen she learned that, because of tax laws that encourage gifts to churches and charitable institutions, she was able to make a

**The scholarship and grants program of Women of the ELCA is entirely the result of past gifts from generous donors.**

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t federal tax deduc-  
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ng the deduction to  
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to give the church  
300 instead of the  
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make more than  
calls a year to talk  
church members  
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know that their gift ben-  
efits from the best profes-  
sional money manage-  
ment and that they can  
rely on annual or quar-  
terly payments. The do-  
nor can always designate  
the ministry to which the  
gift should go. In addi-  
tion, people who make  
gifts during their lifetime  
have the joy of seeing  
their gifts at work in the  
ministries of the church.

Unfortunately, many  
people fail to plan. Ste-  
gemoeller points out that  
70 percent of United  
States' citizens die with-  
out wills, and the assets  
of such people are distrib-  
uted according to the in-  
heritance laws of their re-  
spective states. One  
ELCA member told Ste-  
gemoeller that she decid-  
ed to draw up her will  
when she learned that, if  
she died without making  
a will, her property would  
be divided among 27 first  
cousins, some of whom  
she'd never even met!

Persuading people to  
be responsible about  
making wills is a major  
educational task, accord-  
ing to Stegemoeller. "The  
ministry of Christ should  
always rank as a priority  
when we think of what  
we want to accomplish,"  
he noted. "However we  
spend our money, Chris-  
tians should look at stew-  
ardship as extending to  
all assets." ■

**E**verything  
we have is  
a trust from  
the Lord,  
and however  
we use our  
assets  
should be a  
manifestation  
of our  
Christian  
commitment.

# Sharing the Stories



CELEBRATE  
GOD'S  
CREATION

**V**ideotapes introduced at the First Triennial Convention in July, audiotapes of the convention's keynote speakers, and videotaped highlights of the convention are important Women of the ELCA resources to share throughout the coming triennium. For example:

◆ *Joyful, Thankful, Prayerful: Images of Women of the ELCA* tells the story of Women of the ELCA through the stories of six participants. The 17-minute video is accompanied by a user guide that includes the music and lyrics to Pastor Gladys Moore's accompanying hymn. (Available from Augsburg Fortress locations, order number 35-801-2102, \$10.00.)

◆ *Not a One-Way Street: The Church Responds to Illiteracy* tells the stories of people—students and tutors—whose lives are changed because of church involvement in literacy efforts. This two-part videotape (each part about 24 minutes long) with study guide may be ordered from the ELCA Distribution Service (phone 800-328-4648) for \$15, plus a \$3.25 handling fee *per order*, code number 69-7024.

◆ Hosanna, an independent ministry, audiotaped the keynote speakers and many of the workshops during the triennial convention. These tapes, an “aural history” of the tri-

ennial convention, may be ordered through July 1991. Tapes of speakers include Christine Grum (#201), Sister Paula Gonzalez (#202), Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro (#204), Bishop Herbert Chilstro (#205), the Rev. Maria-Alma Copland (#206), Mary Schramm (#208) and the Rev. Jan Brosen (#209).

To order, send \$3 per tape to Hosanna, 2421 Aztec Road NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107-4224, adding \$ *per order* for handling. Include your name, address, and telephone number (with area code), and *payment* with the order. Note the speaker's name, code number of the tape, and “Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention” on your request. For a complete list of the convention tapes available, write to Hosanna at the address above.

◆ The November 1990 edition *MOSAIC* (ELCA's video magazine) includes a 10-minute summary of Women of the ELCA's First Triennial Convention and three feature stories on women and their ministries in the church. To subscribe (5 issues \$40) or to obtain an individual copy of the November edition (\$10), contact *MOSAIC* Circulation at 800-34648. ■



## MISSION: Action

**A** four-part television series that recently aired on Public Broadcasting System stations across the country strives to reduce stereotypical images we may have of economically disadvantaged countries with visions of hope, self-sufficiency, and success. Titled "Local Heroes, Global Change," the series looks at much of the overseas world through the eyes of the people themselves.

In these four one-hour programs, the disparity of wealth that exists between countries of the industrial North and nations of the South is examined. People who help create positive change in countries from South Asia to West Africa tell their stories and explain what development has come to mean for them. The result is a gripping, intimate, and hope-filled montage of faces and facts.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations have been urged to form study groups to view and discuss "Local Heroes, Global Change" programs. Lutheran Woman Today previewed the piece in December 1989 under the earlier title "Breakthrough on Hunger." If your congregation can't organize a group before the show's airing on PBS, why not consider forming one now? The series can be purchased on videotape, and your discussion group can raise awareness and build a stronger sense of community with people around the world and within your congregation. The program material on the tape remains relevant, and owning a copy

# LOCAL HEROES, GLOBAL CHANGE



of the tape allows your group much more study flexibility in terms of time and content.

Because the ELCA served as part of an interreligious coalition that offered production advice to the series, any ELCA congregation can buy videotaped copies of the programs at a substantially reduced rate. The four programs are on two VHS tapes and come with a study guide and leader/teacher guide. Order from Vision Video, Box 540, 2030 Wentz Church Rd., Worcester, Pennsylvania 19490, phone: 1-800-523-0226. Payment of \$73.90 includes shipping and must accompany an order. ■

*Jennifer Weiss  
Mission: Action*

# Designated Gifts Keep on Giving

Gifts are ways to show others that we appreciate them, that we want the best for them and consider them valued persons in our community. When women give their gifts for specific ministries of the ELCA and Women of the ELCA, they are enabling the Christian community to keep its gifts—its talents, skills, commitments, and vision—in motion for the sake of others.

Designated gifts do many things: support missionaries, help develop leadership skills in the global community, encourage personal and professional growth, bring the hope of the gospel to daily-life situations, and engage each of us in mission and ministry.

Women of the ELCA offers the following designated giving opportunities in 1990:

Project/Program	No.	Goal	*Yr. to date
ELCA World Hunger Appeal	555	\$78,000	\$37,152
The Lutheran Center for Lay Ministry	564	23,000	1,663
Lutheran Appalachian Ministries	565	18,000	2,964
Multicultural Ministry of the Rocky Mountain and Grand Canyon Synods	566	30,000	165
Northern Minnesota Indian Ministry	567	14,000	1,267
Eskimo Ministry	568	40,000	990
Evangelistic Outreach through Media (Peru, Cameroon, Japan)	569	30,000	105
Missionary Support	570	100,000	23,472
Mekane Yesus Church, Ethiopia	571	30,000	430

Overseas Scholarships for			
Theological Study	572	57,000	-0-
Stewardship Development in			
Central and Latin America	573	50,000	716
ELCA Braille and Tape Ministry	574	30,000	1,373
Celebration of the Ministries of Women			
20th Anniversary of Women's			
Ordination in the Lutheran Church)	521	10,000	3,058
Resources for Learning, Growing and			
Being Challenged (Women of the ELCA			
Resource production)	523	20,000	596
Spreading the Good News (Evangelism)	524	10,000	2,533
The Ecumenical Decade: Churches in			
Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998	525	5,000	676
Campaign in Support of Women in		no	
Namibia	527	maximum	25,569
Industries to and with Women			
and Children in Poverty	528	30,000	3,970
Theological Conferences for Women	529	20,000	-0-
Volunteer Reading Aides (Literacy)	530	10,000	3,101
Totals as of August 31, 1990			

Give the gift that keeps on giving, the gift that empowers women and men in and for ministry. Make your check payable to "Women of the ELCA" and indicate the program name and number you wish to support. Gifts received beyond that needed for any one program will be applied to another program in the list. Send your check to

Designated Gifts  
Women of the ELCA  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631

May God who has designated special gifts for your use, continue to bless you as you discover and develop your gifts for ministry. ■

*Bonnie Belasic*  
*Director for Communication*  
*and Stewardship Interpretation*





MISSION: Growth

## A New Version of an 'Old, Old Story'

After 15 years of intense work under the sponsorship of the National Council of Churches, the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible has been published. Its official publication date was September 30, 1990 (though publishers were given permission to release copies beginning May 1). As usage of the NRSV increases and it gains acceptance, publishers will likely begin to phase out their remaining stock of the Revised Standard Version, the NRSV's predecessor.

The translation team for the new version included scholars, both men and women, from a wide range of Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish traditions. (One Lutheran scholar was on the 32-member translation team, and other Lutherans served as advisors.) The translation team worked to offer an unbiased, standard text that is "as *literal* as possible, as *free* as necessary."

Great care has been taken to make the language used in the NRSV understandable and accurate. Its use is

both dignified and reverent. Several features update the RSV, including replacement of archaic words, correction of confusing word order, updating English words that have changed meanings, use of common gender when intended in ancient languages, and improvements in clarity and sound of text. (Notions of God and Christ in the masculine gender have not been changed.)

The NRSV has been recommended by ELCA Bishop Herbert Chilstrom and others as a solid translation and a version worth studying. Women of the ELCA has already begun to incorporate texts from the NRSV into some of its materials. Several monthly texts from the 1990 Women of the ELCA calendar use the new translation, and a number of programs being developed for 1992 will use NRSV biblical texts.

Some of the new resources being developed by Augsburg Fortress will use the NRSV as a primary text. These include: Sunday school curriculum for youth and adults, confirmation curriculum, bulletins, and worship supplements. In addition, Augsburg Fortress will make available several types of NRSV Bible, including special imprint editions, gift and award edition with study helps and notes, and a pew edition.

Crysta W.  
Mission: Growth

came that they  
ay have life, and  
ive it abundantly"  
ohn 10:10b).

# Abundant Life

**Abundant life is so big a promise** that it is difficult to accept. Abundance is, well, *too much*. It seems greedy and presumptuous to accept more than enough. Surely we don't deserve anything so good! If abundant life were a chocolate cake, it would be big, rich, and delicious. But, more often than not, we refuse the gift. Or we accept a smaller piece—one that we can manage and control. If abundant life were a chocolate cake we'd ask for "just a sliver," or maybe pass it up entirely.

If abundant life were a chocolate cake, chocolate cake would be good for us and everyone could and would enjoy it. If abundant life were a chocolate cake, we wouldn't have to pay for it and we couldn't bake it ourselves. We wouldn't have to do anything special to claim a piece, and we wouldn't have to wait until after supper to eat

If abundant life were a chocolate cake, people might approach it differently. Some would be in the middle of the repast before realizing, "Goodness! This is something special!" Others would circle around the table first, anticipating the taste, preparing for the first mouthful.

If abundant life were a chocolate cake, it would have candles on top and a crowd of hungry people around it. The crowd would be made up of all different kinds of people from all over the world, but these people would be more like neighbors than strangers. If abundant life were a chocolate cake there would be more than enough for everyone. In fact, there would be so much that one is moved to share freely, and it would be so good that everyone would ask for the recipe.

Abundant life, a gift from Christ Jesus, is ours to claim. It's bigger and richer and more delicious than anything we can imagine. In the taste of abundant life there is a foretaste of the feast to come. ■

*Sue Edison-Swift  
Park Ridge, Illinois*



# Weave

Genie Craven

During a tour of the Lutheran Center in Chicago, I stood for a long time looking at the wall of woven fabric strips representing the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The variety of colors and textures spoke of the diverse people we are and what we bring to our congregations and to the church at large. I couldn't help but remember the words often sung by Women of the ELCA during its early days . . .

"Weave, weave, weave us together.  
Weave us together in unity and love.  
Weave, weave, weave us together.  
Weave us together, together in love."

There on the wall were strips of rough-textured burlap, shiny satin and crayon on torn muslin. Some strips were made with intricate stitches on aida cloth. Among the strips were the professional and the amateurish.

"We are many textures, we are many colors,  
Each one different from the other.  
But we are entwined with one another  
In one great tapestry."

The line "one great tapestry" came back to me when I visited the AIDS memorial quilt, also known as "The Names Project," when it traveled to Columbus, Ohio. Again I was struck with the variety of materials and creativity used to make 3-inch by 6-inch panels to name, date, and symbolize persons who had died from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. People viewing the quilt grieved for those known and unknown.

"We are different instruments  
Playing our own melodies,  
Each one tuning to a different key  
Weave us together in love."



Those powerful emotions were evoked once again as I visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. No soft weavings here, but a tapestry nevertheless. A different texture, a wall of cold stone, etched sharply with so many names... I reached out to trace a name with my fingertips, almost as if I were reading braille.

"A moment ago, still we did not know our unity, only diversity. Now the Christ in me greets the Christ in thee in one great family."

Weaving and textures, congregational strips, a memorial quilt, names on a wall. The fabric of life.

God, we ask that you

"Weave, weave, weave us together.  
Weave us together in unity and love.  
Weave, weave, weave us together.  
Weave us together, together in love."\* ■

*Genie Craven serves as Christian education coordinator for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Upper Arlington, Ohio and is an active participant in Women of the ELCA.*

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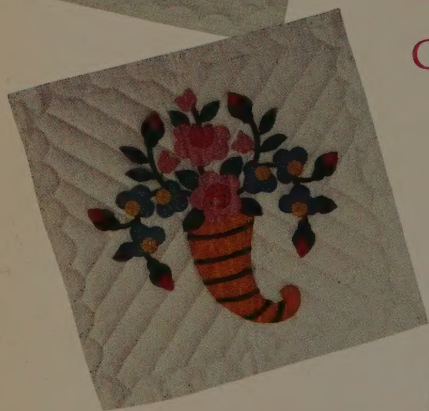
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All kinds of people  
 . . . bound together as one  
 In the church,  
 God's patchwork of love.

See "Patchwork of Love," p. 1



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